News release

Heavy rainfall implications

5 September 2002

The recent floods in Europe have highlighted how vulnerable we all are to the weather. The Met Office is already addressing this issue by developing tools and services to help combat the problem. These include working closely with the Environment Agency and other experts in hydrology, and the development of the National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS).

Using a wide range of technologies the Met Office provides timely warnings to local authorities and the public about potentially dangerous weather events.

As well as the warnings issued via the media, the Met Office has a high-resolution rainfall forecasting and warning system called GANDOLF (Generating Advanced Nowcasts for Deployment in Operational Land-surface flood Forecasts). Developed in partnership with the Environment Agency, it uses radar, satellite and Met Office numerical weather prediction (NWP) model data to forecast rainfall rate and accumulation over England and Wales.

Stewart Wass, Head of Public Services, said: "The Met Office has just commissioned a survey to assess the value of its National Severe Weather Warning Service. It indicates that 89% of respondents are satisfied with the service.

"However, the survey also points out that more detail is required on the location and intensity of the heaviest rain during extreme events - one of the most difficult weather phenomena to forecast. At the Joint Centre for Mesoscale Meteorology, based in Reading, Met Office scientists are developing computer models which will improve these forecasts in future and provide more specific information needed to help put resources in the right place to deal with the worst the weather can throw at us."

Heavy rainfall and its implications are being discussed this week at a Met Office-sponsored event at Reading University. Scientists and weather enthusiasts have been attending the World Weather Research Programme's (WWRP) international conference on quantitative precipitation forecasting.

On Friday experts from the Met Office will be talking about the various severe weather services and exhibiting the GANDOLF and the Met Office's Nimrod forecasting system.

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